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## Health care workforce shortage in 'state of emergency' DBHDD commissioner says

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By: [Ellen Eldridge](#)[REPUBLISH](#)Listen  
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LISTEN: Georgia's behavioral health leaders say staffing shortages are creating challenges for those needing mental health treatment. GPB's Ellen Eldridge reports from the Carter Center's annual Mental Health Forum held Thursday.





A life-size statue of former first lady Rosalynn Carter sits at the health and human sciences complex at Georgia Southwestern State University that is named for her.

**Credit:** File Photo

Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Kevin Tanner spoke at the Carter Center on Thursday, May 18.

He said lack of access to behavioral health care has to do with staffing shortages and they are looking for ways to retain and recruit workers, including higher pay.

The department hired a third party to work closely with DBHDD to analyze staffing needs and find innovative, forward-thinking ways to retain, recruit, and increase the health care worker pipeline.

The last full behavioral health rate study occurred 20 years ago.

"Obviously, the cost of living has changed since 2003 and it is causing us great difficulty in being able to find enough providers in this state and for them to be able to attract a workforce," Tanner said.

The study has been completed and shows that a nearly 40% increase is warranted.

Tanner said DBHDD plans to work closely with the General Assembly next session to try to get state funding around \$107 million annually.

"We have a state of emergency when it comes to the workforce in this state, specifically around health care," Tanner said. "And that is even more significant around the space that we operate in in behavioral health." 《

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Ellen Eldridge (she/her) is the senior health care reporter for Georgia Public Broadcasting.

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